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PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS
HHS FOR CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL

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SUBJECT: BRAZZAVILLE IN BRIEF - MAY 15, 2009

11. Presidential campaign is heating up: Although local press has remained mysteriously silent about the fact, a fire in the Republic of Congo's (ROC) President Sassou Nguesso's home village of Edou this past week destroyed at least two vehicles and a stockpile of election materials. International press has picked up the story and is saying that the election materials were mainly left-over supplies from the 2007 legislative elections but rumors as saying the materials were to be used in the July 12 presidential election. Either way, the fire did not put a dent in the President's visit to the northern reaches of the Congo where he inaugurated a stadium and market in Owando and kicked off the construction of a hydroelectric dam in Ngo. A large turnout of the population greeted him at each stop. Each admirer is purportedly paid the equivalent of US\$4 and walks away with a clean t-shirt.

12. Influenza preparedness: The Director of the ROC National Laboratory confirmed there are no/no cases of H1N1 in the ROC. The Ministry of Health has been very proactive and is working with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to prepare for its inevitable arrival. At present, ROC has 100 courses of Tamiflu on order and the Ministry of Health has submitted a request for additional stockpiles to the regional office of the WHO. The CDC has provided the National Laboratory with an Applied Biosystem's Real Time PCR machine and detection reagents are en route to Brazzaville. Once the reagents arrive, Applied Biosystems will dispatch a technician to Brazzaville to provide training to staff at National Lab. The director anticipates that the PCR H1N1 detection system will be fully operational by the end of July 2009. Currently, the ROC has taken no specific measures to prevent the arrival of H1N1 in country. No special screening systems have been set up at the airport and the ROC does not envision trying to reduce its exposure by limiting travel or commerce with countries with confirmed cases of H1N1. Should H1N1 infection rates spike in Europe or in any neighboring country, however, the ROC has plans in place to monitor and track the infection in country.

13. Congo-B is not giving away the farm: ConOff met with the Office Director at Ministry of Agriculture, Jean Fulgence Mouangou, to discuss the recently announced South African farming project in Congo-Brazzaville. Congo-Brazzaville and the South African farm group, Agri SA are in negotiations to bring South African farmers to the Republic of Congo to restart local commercial farming. Recent press articles have reported that South African farmers were "flocking" to Congo-B for their share of the 10 million hectares that are allegedly up for grabs. The chairman of Agri SA, Andre Botha, was also quoted as saying that both the French and the American embassies were opposed to the deal. Mouangou reported that negotiations were still in a preliminary phase, but that discussions were underway with Agri SA to re-start several state owned farms that had been abandoned in the wake of the transition away from the Marxist-Leninist People's Republic of Congo in 1992. Mouangou said that the press had grossly overstated the amount of land available as 10 million hectares is actually the entire agricultural potential of the Republic of the Congo. Mouangou went on to say that the allegations against the French and the Americans were baseless. He claimed that the allegations came from Agri SA and said they

had since been retracted. Mouangou reported that the GROC had requested a formal explanation of the statements. The actual details of the deal between Agri SA and Congo-Brazzaville are still under negotiation. At present, Congo-Brazzaville and Agri SA have signed a "declaration of intentions," but have not yet moved forward with a formal contract agreement. The formal contract agreement will most likely be a concessionary agreement granting Agri SA a temporary lease to operate the state farms. Mouvangou said that Agri SA would be required to employ local farmers and the contract would include a technology and skills transfer clause. Mouangou expected formal negotiations to recommence as early as 18 May upon the Minister of Agriculture's return from Paris.

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